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PRESS RELEASE

Date/Time of Release: Thursday, October 4, 2001, 11:30
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Nature of Release: Sheriff's helicopter crew puts latest training to good use
Location of Release: Placer County

Released by Capt. Rick Armstrong, (530) 889-7816

SHERIFF EDWARD N. BONNER RELEASES THE FOLLOWING:

Pilots from the Placer County Sheriff Department's helicopter unit recently completed high-altitude training that they've used four times since their return to save lost hikers from mountainous, rugged areas of the Sierra Nevada range.

Lt. Dave Harris, along with fellow helicopter pilots and deputies Paul Woodruff and Van Bogardus, completed advanced high-altitude training at the U.S. Army High Altitude Training Site at Eagle, Colorado in mid-September. Since then, they've rescued six hikers in the high country.

According to Lt. Harris, the crewmembers spent two days flying one of the department's helicopters, Eagle One, to the Air National Guard base. As Deputy Woodruff taxied the aircraft on the morning of September 11, for training in altitudes similar to those between Auburn and Lake Tahoe, he was called back by the tower. The East Coast terrorist events were unfolding and all aircraft were grounded immediately.

The crew continued ground training for two more days, as they monitored the national events. Finally, they were given approval and special codes to use, but they were restricted to fly in specific areas.

"They told us not to make any mistakes with the codes since fighter jets were flying overhead," Harris said.

Once back in Placer County, the pilots did exactly what they were taught: To conduct specialized helicopter performance management at any altitude, especially high altitude.

"Safety margins become very narrow at high altitudes and we learned how winds behave in mountainous areas," Harris said. "The instructors at this school, the only one of its kind in the country, are top-notch. It was tremendous to be able to put this training to good use so soon. We were the first law enforcement agency in the U.S. to be able to attend this course. We are very grateful to the Colorado Air National Guard and the U.S. Army for allowing us to participate."

This press release and others are available at www.placer.ca.gov/sheriff.